

# Heart of BREARD

A Publication of Brevard Public Schools

INAUGURAL ISSUE



Fall 2019

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Cover Photo: Lily Martin and Jenna Naylor



Look for the next issue of Heart of Brevard coming in November.



Heart of Brevard is a publication of Brevard Public Schools.

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# From the Assistant Superintendent...



By Matt Reed

You are holding the very first edition of *Heart of Brevard*. Thank you for your curiosity and willingness to learn more about our community, especially your public schools.

We think you'll love the stories - here, and in

quarters to come - about the accomplishments, personalities, and new initiatives in Brevard Public Schools. Our writers will take you in-depth into the educational issues that matter most to our families and community.

## In this issue look for articles about:

- What it takes to start a new school year - a welcome back message from Superintendent Mark Mullins.
- The push to prevent student athletes from dying from student cardiac arrest.
- Perspectives on a new school year from our 2019 Teacher of the Year, Shannon Kraeling.
- The many options offered through CTE, a senior year prep checklist, first day of school photos from around the district and so much more.

Besides the articles, please take your time perusing the advertisements. All are for companies, professionals and organizations that support your neighborhood public schools. Revenue from this magazine pays not for only its production but other efforts by BPS to keep residents informed and engaged in our children's education.

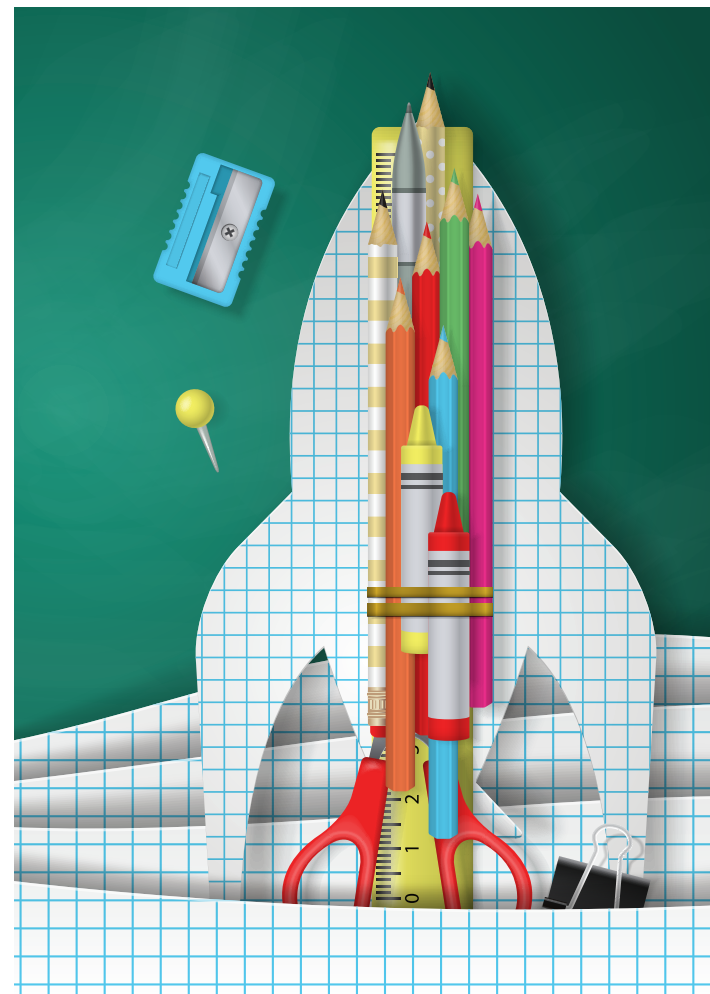
Why call this magazine "Heart of Brevard?"

Because we believe your public schools and the world-class teachers and staff who make them work are at the heart of nearly everything important on the Space Coast.

You trust our schools to develop the next generation of culturally literate, career- and college-ready citizens. Our schools serve as hubs of community - as gathering places, as sources and beneficiaries of volunteerism, as drivers of property values and wealth, as sources of neighborhood pride. The professional teachers and support staff who make BPS an A-rated school district - always one of the best in Florida - comprise the largest workforce in Brevard County. We are proud of it all.

We hope you enjoy this inaugural issue. We welcome your feedback and ideas as we launch this new chapter in telling our great story.

Matt Reed is Assistant Superintendent for Government & Community Relations, Brevard Public Schools. Contact him at [reed.matthew@brevardschools.org](mailto:reed.matthew@brevardschools.org).



## 2019 - 2020 Brevard County School Calendar

Month	Day	Event
AUGUST	2 (FRI)	Teachers Report Pre-Planning
	5 (MON)	Pre-Planning
	6 (TUES)	Professional Development Day
	7-9 (WED-FRI)	Pre-Planning
	12 (MON)	First Day Of School for Students
	15 (THURS)	Kindergarten Starts
	19 (MON)	VPK Starts
SEPTEMBER	2 (MON)	Labor Day - Holiday for All
	11 (WED)	First Interim Ends
	16 (MON)	Secondary Interims Posted on Focus
	19 (THURS)	Block Report Cards Issued Elementary Interims Posted on Focus/Issued
OCTOBER	7-11 (MON-FRI)	FTE Survey II
	11 (FRI)	End of First Nine Weeks
	14 (MON)	Teacher Work Day/Student Holiday
	16 (WED)	Secondary Grades Posted on Focus
	18 (FRI)	Elementary Report Cards Posted on Focus/Issued
	22 (TUES)	Secondary Report Cards Issued
NOVEMBER	11 (MON)	Veterans' Day/ Holiday for All
	15 (FRI)	Second Interim Ends
	20 (WED)	Secondary Interims Posted on Focus
	25 (MON)	Block Report Cards Issued Elementary Interims Posted on Focus/Issued
	27-29 (WED-FRI)	Thanksgiving Break (28, 29 Holiday for All)
DECEMBER	18-20 (WED-FRI)	Exams Days/ Early Dismissal
	23-31 (MON-TUES)	Winter Break Teacher/ Student Holiday (23, 27, 30, 31 Non-Work Days for All)
JANUARY	1 (WED)	Holiday For All
	2-3 (THURS-FRI)	Winter Break- Teacher/Student Holiday/Non-Work Day for All
	6-7 (MON-TUES)	Winter Break - Teacher/Student Holiday
JANUARY	8 (WED)	Teachers/Students Return/ End of 1st Semester
	13 (MON)	Secondary Grades Posted on Focus
	15 (WED)	Elementary Report Cards Posted on Focus/Issued
	17 (FRI)	Secondary Report Cards Issued
	20 (MON)	Martin L. King, Jr. Day - Holiday for All
FEBRUARY	3-7 (MON-FRI)	FTE Survey III
	10 (MON)	Third Interim Ends
	13 (THURS)	Secondary Interims Posted on Focus
	17 (MON)	Teacher PD Day/ Student Holiday
18 (TUES)	Block Report Cards Issued Elementary Interims Posted on Focus/Issued	
MARCH	13 (FRI)	End of Third Nine Weeks
	16-20 (MON-FRI)	Spring Break
	23 (MON)	Student Holiday/Teacher Work Day
	25 (WED)	Secondary Grades Posted on Focus
	27 (FRI)	Elementary Report Cards Posted on Focus/Issued
	31 (TUES)	Secondary Report Cards Issued
APRIL	10 (FRI)	Teacher/Student Holiday
	23 (THURS)	Fourth Interim Ends
	24 (FRI)	Teacher/Student Holiday
	29 (WED)	Secondary Interims Posted on Focus
MAY	4 (MON)	Block Report Cards Issued Elementary Interims Posted on Focus/Issued
	25 (MON)	Memorial Day-Holiday for all
	26-28 (TUES-THURS)	Exams Days/Early Dismissal
	28 (THURS)	End of Second Semester/Last Day for Students Elementary Report Cards Issued
29 (FRI)	Elementary Report Cards Posted on Focus Post Planning/ Last Day for Teachers	
JUNE	1 (MON)	Secondary Grades Posted on Focus
	Mid-June	Secondary Report Cards Issued

**Fridays are Early Release Days**

**Student Days 1st Semester - 90**

**Student Days 2nd Semester - 90**

\* During the 2019 - 2020 school year, emergency days will be taken in the following order: November 27 and February 17. The order for using make up days for schools closed due to emergencies will depend on where the emergencies fall during the school year. PAID HOLIDAYS FOR TEACHERS SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION.

# It Takes Heart

By: Dr. Mark Mullins, Superintendent, Brevard Public Schools

The 2019-2020 school year is officially underway. On August 12th, we welcomed more than 70,000 students through our doors and then an additional 5,000 kindergartners a few days later.

**Starting a new school year takes a tremendous team effort. In fact, it takes more than 9,000 dedicated individuals to make this organization run and to affect the lives of every child we serve.**

I want to commend our awesome facilities services team and their contractors, for hustling over the summer to make our schools safer and more comfortable places to work.

We have more than 350 bus drivers on the roads working to safely transport some 23,000 students to and from school each day. Our 84 schools each have crossing guards and SROs, who keep our children and staff safe and out of harm's way. Our Food and Nutrition Services team prepare and serve more than 60,000 meals a day and our Brevard After School team provides a safe and healthy place beyond the school day for more than 5,000 kids.

There are ESE staff, reading coaches, social workers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists across our schools helping kids meet their full potential while keeping them socially and emotionally strong.

And that doesn't even cover our administrative and instructional teams.

We have 11 new principals this year taking the helm to continue our legacy of excellence, and some 350 new teachers stepping into classrooms for the first time. They have joined a world class team of educators, some 4,400 strong.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention our district staff — the backbone of our organization and the people who create the programs and policies that keep our district progressing.

There are more than 20,000 parent volunteers who lend their time, energy and enthusiasm to supporting our teachers and participating in parent groups and on School Advisory Committees,

and 700+ Partners in Education who support our schools with monetary and in-kind contributions, but also through mentoring and invaluable internship opportunities.

We cannot reach our goals of a successful post-graduation pathway for each and every student (whether college or career) without strong support and engagement from businesses, continuing education, non-profits and the faith-based community.

We have much to celebrate as we begin a new school year.

Brevard Public Schools was once again named an "A" rated school district by the Florida Department of Education. We rank number one in Florida among districts our size or larger, and our students outperformed the state in nearly every subject last year. We increased our number of "A" and "B" schools, and for the first time in many years, we have NO "D" or failing public schools.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our teachers, who continued to put students first, even as they endured a difficult year of salary negotiations.

As we look ahead, compensation will continue to



be my top priority. I am committed to seeking long-term options to resolve this recurring challenge and advancing a more competitive wage so we can retain and attract our greatest asset -- the people dedicated to educating and serving the children of Brevard County.

BPS is the largest employer in the county. Our trade is a vital and precious commodity, as we are growing future generations of thinkers, builders, healers, artists, athletes and leaders. Our teachers and those who work in support of them deserve more.

**It takes a whole lot of HEART to be in education, and I am so very grateful for the passion our team and partners bring to this profession and the sacrifices they make to teach, inspire, and support our children.**

I am optimistic about the year ahead and look forward to seeing our students soar to even greater heights.

Wishing our kids and families a successful school year.

# STAY CONNECTED WITH BPS



## District & School Websites

Visit [www.Brevardschools.org](http://www.Brevardschools.org) then visit the "SCHOOLS" tab at the top right.



## Text & E-mail Alerts

Download the BPS Mobile app from the App Store or Google Play for district and school events and emergency notifications.



## Social Media

Facebook @ [facebook.com/BrevardPublicSchools\(official\)](https://facebook.com/BrevardPublicSchools(official))

Twitter @ [@brevardschools](https://twitter.com/brevardschools)

LinkedIn @ [Brevard Public Schools](https://www.linkedin.com/company/brevard-public-schools/)



## Access to Parent Portal

Check grades, attendance, school event calendars and more! Download the Focus app in the App Store or Google Play. Access code...



YouTube

## Become Informed and Get Involved

Watch monthly School Board meetings live streamed live on Spectrum 496 or the BPS YouTube Channel.

Submit A Tip Online



## School & Community News and Events

Peachjar removes the clutter from your child's backpack and provides school and community -centric information in an electronic format found in the District's mobile app or at [www.peachjar.com](http://www.peachjar.com), where you can sign up.



**FORTIFYFL**  
SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING APP  
#FORTIFYFL

## Suspicious Activity Reporting App

FortifyFL is a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials.



## Principal of the Year Heather Price

Heather Price, principal of Brevard Virtual School, has been named Brevard Public Schools' Principal of the Year. Price is a pioneer of online learning for Brevard students. Online options for students through Brevard Virtual have grown significantly under her leadership, and Price has been credited with fostering a "school culture" for her online students and her staff.

"Using research-based strategies, Heather has inspired her teachers to be more than just a voice on a device," said West Shore Jr./Sr. High Principal Rick Fleming, who nominated Price for the recognition. "I am inspired by Heather and her leadership ability in being innovative and thinking outside of the box."

### Candidates for BPS Principal of the Year and Assistant Principal of the Year were nominated and evaluated based on their performance in:

- Student achievement
- Instructional leadership
- Faculty development
- Learning environment
- Organizational leadership
- Leadership development
- Communication



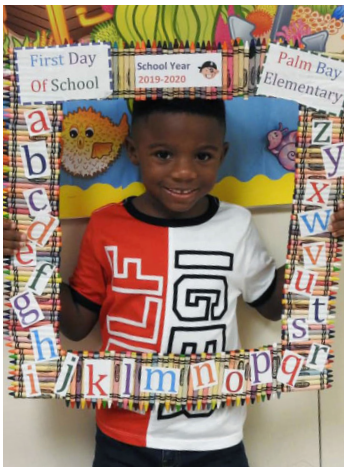
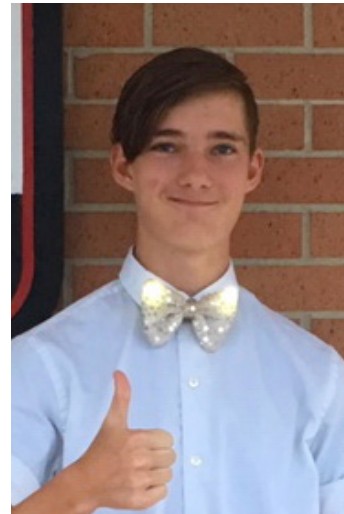
## Assistant Principal of the Year Sarah Robinson

Viera High's Sarah Robinson has been named Brevard Public Schools' Assistant Principal of the Year. Robinson recently was promoted to principal at VHS, due in large part to her leadership there. Robinson functioned as acting principal this past school year after former principal Mike Alba took a director's position with the school district.

Although Robinson delegated a number of her assistant-principal tasks to other school leaders, she continued to take responsibility for curriculum, the focus of her assistant position.

"She fulfilled both roles with excellence," said BPS Superintendent Mark Mullins, citing the nomination letter. "Mrs. Robinson has consistently demonstrated both the instructional and organization leadership

needed to ensure student achievement and manage a large high school. Faculty development is a focus for her."



**BPS BY THE NUMBERS**

**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS:**

- Elementary: 56
- Middle: 11
- Jr./Sr. High: 4
- High: 12
- Online: 1

**MEALS SERVED: 60,000 DAILY**

**STUDENTS: 70,000+**

**SENIOR CLASS: APPROX. 5,500**

**INCOMING KINDERGARTEN CLASS: APPROX. 5,000**

**PARENT VOLUNTEERS: 20,648**

**PARTNERS IN EDUCATION: 700+**

**TEACHERS: 4,400+**

**TOTAL EMPLOYEES: 9,000+**

**NEW TEACHERS: 350**

- 0 "D" OR FAILING SCHOOLS
- 6 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS
- 2 HIGH SCHOOLS RANKED IN TOP 10 IN FLORIDA
- #1 RATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE STATE
- 9TH LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE
- #1 IN FLORIDA AMONG DISTRICTS OUR SIZE OR LARGER

**BUS RIDERS: APPROX. 23,000**

# A New School Year Brings a Renewed Sense of Purpose

By Shannon Kraeling, 2019 District Teacher of the Year

As a teacher, this is one of my most exciting times of the year. I love thinking about who's going to be in my classes. There are so many things I want to know about them. What are their strengths and talents? Why did they choose ceramics? How will they express their creativity? What amazing works of art will be manifested?

Every year, I take the time to set up my classroom so it will be a welcoming, comfortable learning environment for my students. It's bright, colorful (my desk is hot pink), and filled with positive energy and motivational quotes. I want my students to feel at home, confident, and emotionally safe enough to accept difficult learning challenges and be open to experience learning through struggle and failure.

Recently, I was honored to be part of the Florida Teacher of the Year Roundtable Summit. I learned so many valuable things that will influence the direction of my teaching and how I shape my relationships with my students.

I learned about the growth mindset and how important it is to help our students embrace this learning philosophy. This is the mindset that makes students believe in themselves. I learned about the power of "yet" and how this is a fantastic response when my students tell me they can't do something. They can't do it "yet." This small word

encourages them to believe anything is possible. I was reminded to set the achievement bar high because with quality instruction, relationships, and expectations students will not only meet the expectations, many will surpass them.

As teachers we understand that relationships are as important, and with some students more important than, the content we are trying to teach them. While we strive to establish relationships with all of our students there are some that can make it pretty challenging.

A reminder I carry with me is, **"Never judge anybody by the chapter of their life in which you meet them. You never know what they might do in the next chapter."** We are all a

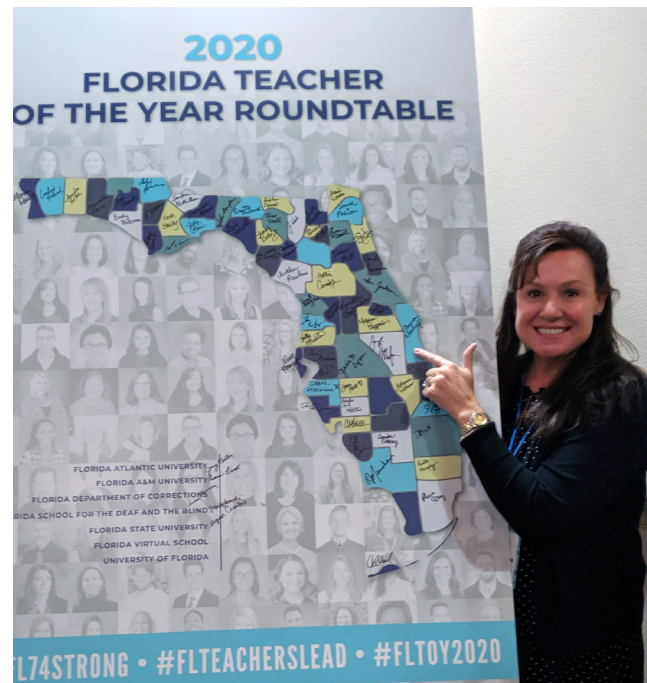
work in progress. We are doing the best we can dealing with our individual situations and challenges.

Before reacting or responding to a student, I will take the time to understand the circumstances that have led to their actions? I've made a promise to remind myself to use the information I receive as an opportunity to **ELEVATE** instead of just rebuking or punishing.

Lucas Boyce, the author of *Living Proof* struck a chord

with me when he said "You have the opportunity to change the trajectory of a person's life." It's both humbling and powerful to think that I have the potential to shape and influence someone's life. My "why" is that I care about my students, I believe in education, I'm passionate about the arts in education, and I love what I do. Most importantly, I know that I make a difference.

As I start this new school year I vow to remember my WHY. My students need me. They deserve the best ME and that's what they will get! I can't wait to meet my 2019/20 students. I'm looking forward to all of our upcoming moments and adventures. Welcome to my classroom!



## What the research tells us:

**90%** of brain development and most neural connections develop in the **first five years** of a child's life.



The US Department of Education explains "Raising the next generation is a **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**. When families, communities and schools **WORK TOGETHER**, students are more successful and the entire **COMMUNITY BENEFITS**."



Children **THRIVE** and are more likely to be successful in school when they are read to and talked to regularly beginning from birth. It is never too early to read, sing, talk and play with our children!



- Books for Babies
- Community Resources
- Parent Education
- Early Childhood Screening



**Brevard Public Schools wants all of our children to Thrive by Five!**

**Early intervention is the key to ensuring that every child in our community is ready for kindergarten and successful in meeting or exceeding full potential.**

**Three fundamental factors facilitate proper brain development:**

- 1 Quality of **environment** (home, daycare, school, etc.)
- 2 Quality of **interactions** (between children and all others in their lives)
- 3 Quality of **teachers** (*parents* are children's first and most important teachers)

**The greatest Return On Investment for our community will be realized when we invest in our most valuable assets - OUR CHILDREN!**

**Proud to support Brevard families**

*Violette, Brilliant Smiles Orthodontics' Teaching Tooth Fairy*

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# Senior Checklist

Fall is an important time of year for Brevard County seniors preparing to graduate in May. Here is a helpful checklist for some early to-dos and deadlines.

**Between now and October be sure to:**

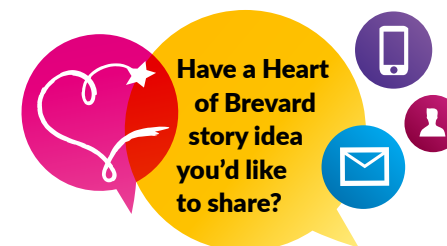
- Arrange for senior portraits.
- Verify credits, GPA and testing needed to fulfill graduation requirements.
- Confirm volunteer hours have been entered and submitted to qualify for Florida Bright Futures.

- Choose 3-5 colleges/universities or trade schools and mark your calendar with key dates, events and deadlines.
- Identify teachers to complete recommendation letters. Email or hand them a resume to help them include your accomplishments.
- FAFSA opens October 1, 2019.  
**DID YOU KNOW:** Students who completed the FAFSA early can receive up to twice the amount of state and institutional aid as those who complete it later.
- Know the SAT and ACT test dates. Visit [https:// www.collegeboard.org/](https://www.collegeboard.org/)

## Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Guidelines Class of 2020

	Florida Academic Scholarship (FAS) -Covers 120 credit hours-	Florida Medallion Scholarship (FMS) -Covers 120 credit hours-	Florida Gold Seal Vocational (GSV) -Covers 72 credit hours-
<b>Award Amount<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Up to:</b> \$1,545/semester – 4 year \$945/semester – 2 year \$780/semester – Voc. Center	<b>Up to:</b> \$1,155/semester – 4 year \$720/semester – 2 year \$585/semester – Voc. Center	<b>Up to:</b> \$720/semester – AS, AAS, CCC \$585/semester – PSAV* \$585/semester – ATD*
<b>Requirements:</b>			
<b>1. GPA</b>	3.5 weighted in core classes only	3.0 weighted in core classes only	3.0 weighted in core classes AND 3.5 in 3yrs in the same vocational program
<b>2. Core Classes</b>	4- English (3 with substantial writing) 4- Math (Algebra 1 & Above2) 3- Science (2 with substantial lab) 3- Social Science 2- World Language - (sequential, in the same language)	4- English (3 with substantial writing) 4- Math (Algebra 1 & Above2) 3- Science (2 with substantial lab) 3- Social Science 2- World Language - (sequential, in the same language)	4- English 4- Math (Including Algebra 12) 3- Science 3- Social Science (2 with substantial lab) 1- Fine Arts; OR 1 Identified Practical Art; OR .5 credit in each .5 credit in any P.E. course .5 credit of Personal Fitness +3 Career Tech Ed credits in a vocational program over 2 academic years
<b>3. Service Hours</b>	100 Hours	75 Hours	30 Hours
<b>4. Test Scores</b>	SAT – 1290 (CR & Math only) ~OR~ ACT – 29 (Composite)	SAT – 1170 (CR & Math only) ~OR~ ACT – 26 (Composite)	SAT – 440 (CR) & 440 (Math) <b>ACT</b> 17 English 19 Reading 19 Math <b>PERT</b> 106 Reading 103 Writing 114 Math

<sup>1</sup>Award amounts are approximate and subject to change after each legislative session. <sup>2</sup>Algebra 1A/1B count as one credit.  
\*PSAV – Career Certificate Program / ATD – Applied Technology Diploma Program



Know an educator or someone at BPS who made a difference in your life or the life of a student? Email <http://goheart@brevardschools.org> and let us know! Your story may be shared in a future edition.



# Mandated Electrocardiogram for Student Athletes is Saving Lives in Brevard



Brevard Public Schools (BPS) recently mandated electrocardiogram (ECG) testing for all its student athletes. Electrocardiograms help identify athletes who may be at risk for sudden death from loss of heart function. An ECG may also assist with diagnosing several different heart conditions that put athletes at risk. BPS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Who We Play For (WWPF), an organization committed to early identification of cardiac conditions in student athletes. Through this initiative, lives like Chris Cofer's are being saved. Cofer, a 7th grade student at Kennedy Middle School, underwent the screening provided and was found to have a high risk defect which required surgical intervention. In fact, during his procedure to repair the defect, another issue with his heart was discovered and able to be corrected as well.



Cofer in the hospital

Since June 1, 2019 WWPF has confirmed seven children with potentially deadly heart conditions that have been treated including five surgeries, and they referred a child for evaluation of the deadliest of heart conditions (HCM).

For more information on upcoming screenings, visit <https://www.whoweplayfor.org/screening>.

Chris Cofer returned to the field one week after his potentially life-saving procedure was completed



# Download the BPS FOCUS Mobile App Today!

You can now monitor your child's progress on your mobile device.

## Features

- Quickly access each child's schedule, attendance and grades
- View assignments
- Stay up-to-date on district and school news
- Receive messages from school administration and teachers

If you don't already have a FOCUS account, you will need to obtain a PIN number from your child's school.

For information on creating your FOCUS account, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/gradebookBPS>



# Today's CTE: Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce

By Steven R. Hicks, Ed.D.

I am going to break a few rules here. First, I am biased. Secondly, I'm a second-year teacher in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at Viera High and cannot imagine doing anything else. But, having said that, I also have long held a strong belief that we need to teach the trades in our schools more now than ever before.

**Name an occupation. Whatever field you choose, chances are there is a class, or even an entire course of study, that will give you relevant experience with the latest technology. You will gain knowledge, experience and confidence as you explore careers from the inside out.**

In the May 2018 issue of Space Coast Business, I wrote an article about the CTE program in Brevard. Managing personnel and finding qualified talent is always a hot topic in industry. For that article I spoke with Janice Scholz, the director for CTE who said, "No matter where I go and who I talk to, I hear our skilled workforce is aging out, and there is nobody standing in line to take those jobs."

Our district is meeting this challenge head on by offering more than 45 high school CTE programs or certifications. **Last year, 30-percent of BPS graduates earned industry certifications in CTE/STEM courses - the second highest in the state.**

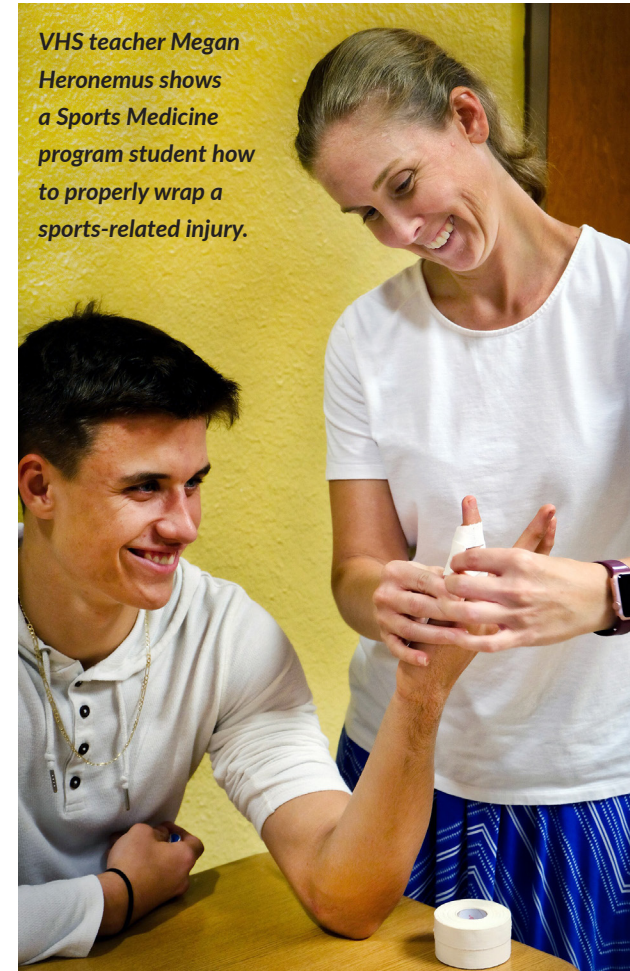
Some schools have CTE classes, some have entire academies dedicated to their particular areas of concentration. At Viera High, I teach Adobe products like Photoshop and Illustrator with the end goal of students becoming Adobe Certified Associates, but we also offer fashion and interior design services, Television Production Technology and Early Childhood Education, among others.

In fact, we recently introduced a CTE Exercise Science program to help prepare students for the

wellness and fitness marketplace and its various components such as instructing or coaching groups or individuals in exercise activities and the fundamentals of an individual's health and wellness.

Students enrolled in the program will participate in internships, field trips and hear from many guest speakers.

Viera High's brand new wellness center is state-of-the-art and will only be utilized by our CTE Exercise Science students. Then, at the end of their third year, students will have the opportunity to take a certified medical administrative assistant exam to become CMAA-certified.

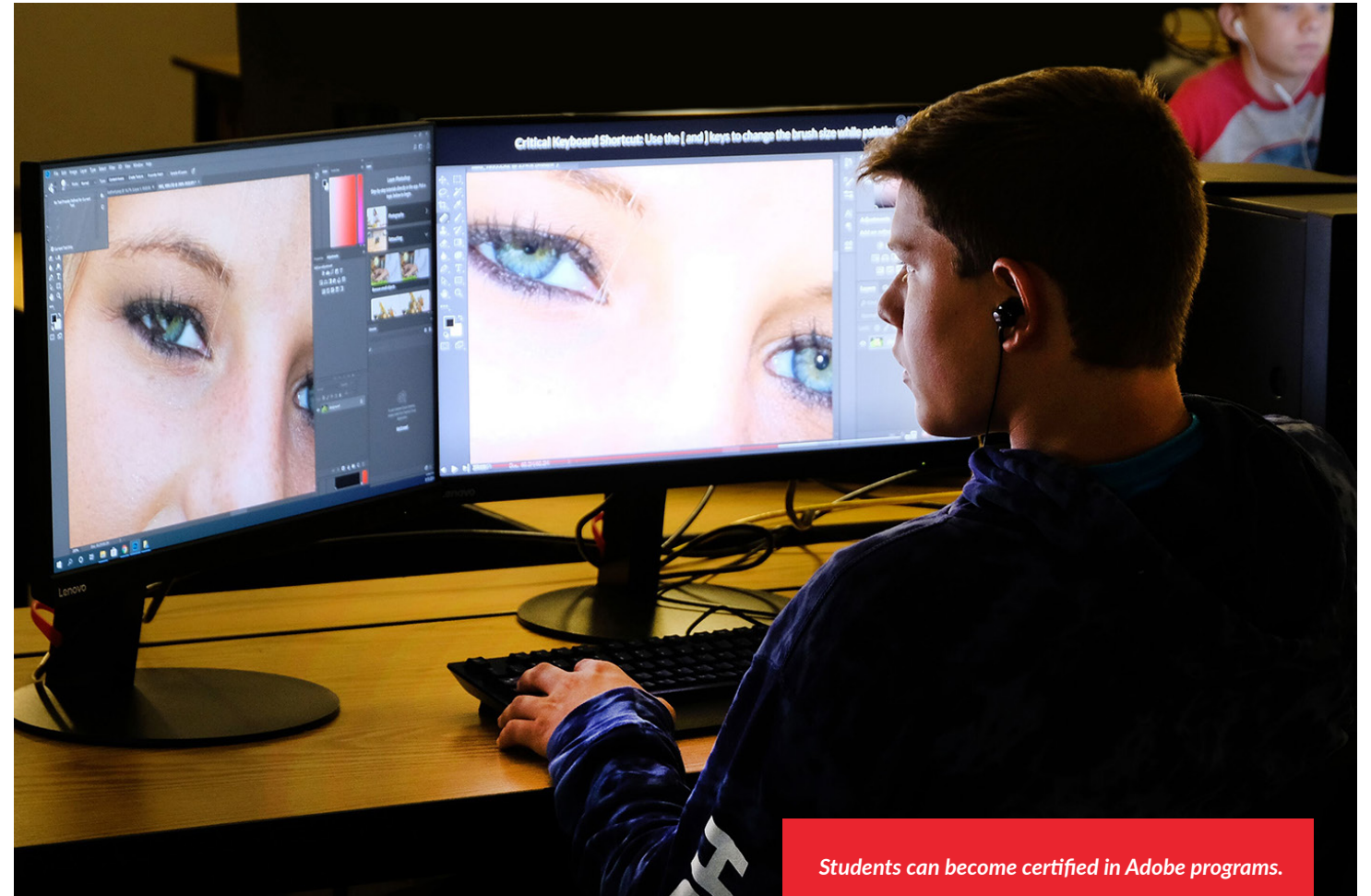


VHS teacher Megan Heronemus shows a Sports Medicine program student how to properly wrap a sports-related injury.

Megan Heronemus, the teacher responsible for initiating the idea of a sports medicine program at VHS and its development, said, "In

a community that is rich in healthcare occupations, this program will serve as a catalyst for students to enter the healthcare field of their choice or go on to college to continue their medical education."

Carrie Humphrys, Viera's CTE department chair said, "We are excited to develop this new program within the booming Central Brevard Medical Community. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs aim to meet community needs by preparing students to enter the local



Students can become certified in Adobe programs.

workforce making the placement of this program advantageous. Additionally, the local sports community is supported with the skills being learned by students."

Programs around the county include Autodesk, Adobe Creative Cloud, Chief Architect Certified Associate, Child Development Associate, FAA Ground School, HVAC, QuickBooks Certified, Microsoft Office Specialist and Master, MSSC Certification, JavaScript, Aerospace Assembly, ASE Auto Maintenance and Light Repair, ProStart, Certified Food Protection, HTML5 and CSS3, Certifies SolidWorks, and the new Sports Medicine program. There are also courses in Culinary Arts, Computer Applications, and a group of Exploration of Career and Technical occupation courses. I may have missed a couple as this list is ever-evolving as new teachers with experience in new fields join BPS.

"Students who enroll in our programs get a better sense of what they want to do. Those complex formulas they're learning in physics and calculus become real. The slope they learn about in math becomes the pitch on a roof for a student in construction. It brings the complex math to the practical application. The student who doesn't get those formulas because it doesn't make sense suddenly understands when you show it in the context of building a concrete structure" said Scholz, Director of Career and Technical Education for Brevard Public Schools.

There are so many vastly different career possibilities on the Space Coast, and our CTE programs support those possibilities. As a teacher, I look forward to new programs that provide our students with viable choices, options, and alternatives.

(Link to CTE information on BPS website: <https://www.brevardschools.org/Page/2325>)



# A Journey of Hope

By Katherine Allen,  
Government &  
Community Relations,

*Every so often,  
in the course of  
an ordinary day,*

*you are handed a reminder of how precious life is, and how remarkable people really are. This is a story of hope and of a young girl who is inspirational in ways she may never realize. On a work assignment, I was asked to film testimonial videos from recent graduates of Brevard Adult Education.*



*On the drive to their central campus, I never could have anticipated meeting someone like Dacia. I am so excited to share her story with you, the reader, and I hope you will be inspired too.*

As a student at Meadowlane Intermediate, Dacia was diagnosed with a very rare blood disease in 2008. The illness took a toll and she was forced to withdraw from school as she fought through treatments and hospitalizations. When I asked her what she was most afraid of during that time, she told me that she wasn't afraid of the idea of dying, but rather of leaving her family behind and not getting to pursue her dreams.

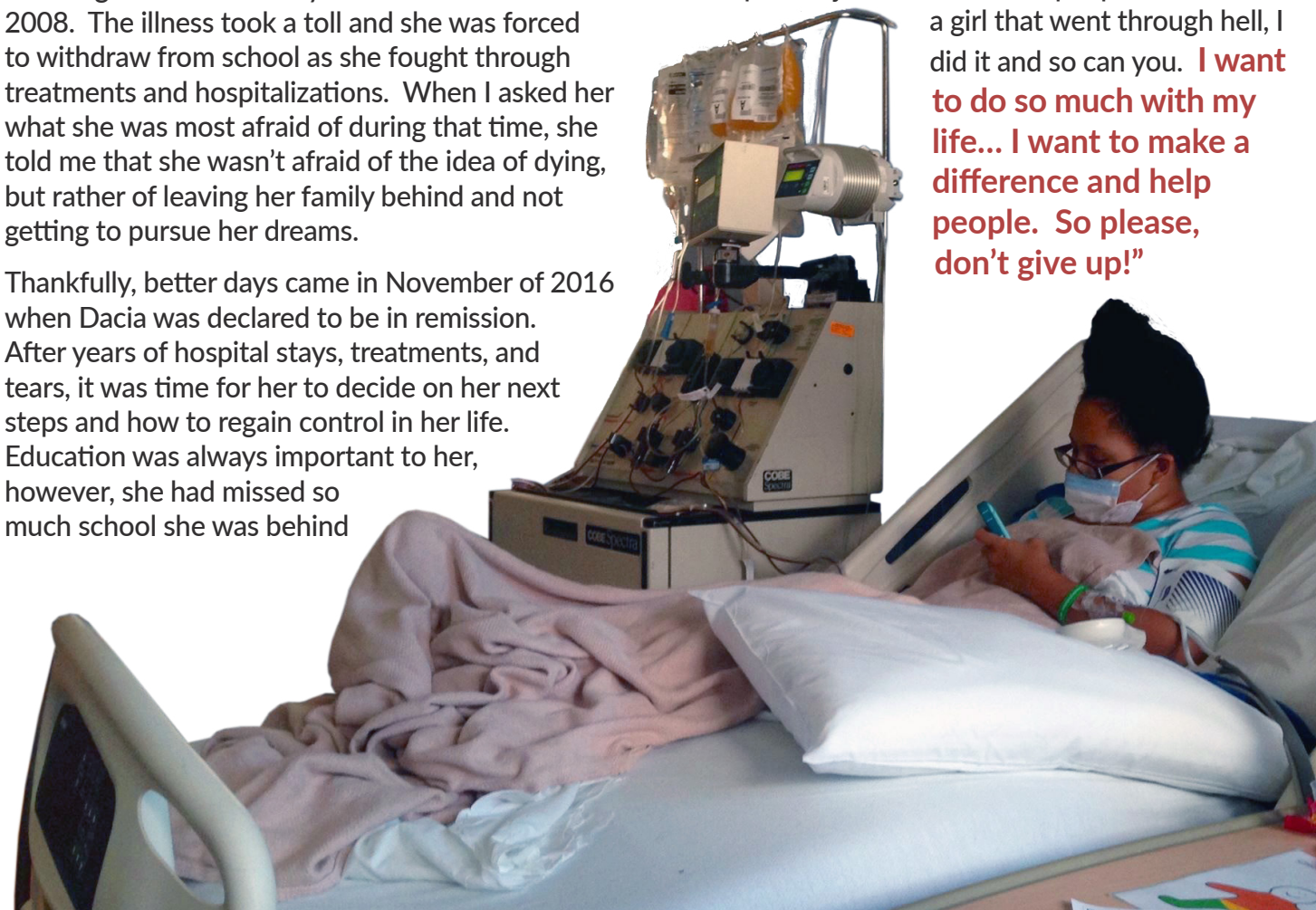
Thankfully, better days came in November of 2016 when Dacia was declared to be in remission. After years of hospital stays, treatments, and tears, it was time for her to decide on her next steps and how to regain control in her life. Education was always important to her, however, she had missed so much school she was behind

and not sure how she was going to fulfill her lifelong dream of attending college. Thankfully, she found Brevard Adult Education and began to pursue her GED.

Her journey to her GED didn't come without its own set of challenges. In fact, when asked about her time at Brevard Adult Education, she admitted it was tremendously difficult for her at first, since she hadn't been able to complete 8th grade. She wasn't prepared for the math in particular and found herself feeling a bit discouraged. However, she went on to talk about the amazing support she received from her teachers. She spoke about how they would stay after school with her and go over problems and theories until she understood the material and could complete her assignments.

Through her perseverance, Dacia Morris graduated with her GED this June and is now attending Eastern Florida State College to become a phlebotomist with plans to pursue a career in either forensic pathology or pediatric neurosurgery. When asked what she would say to someone who is facing tough times, she replied "I just want to show people that even as

a girl that went through hell, I did it and so can you. **I want to do so much with my life... I want to make a difference and help people. So please, don't give up!**"



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# Q&A with School Board Chair Tina Descovich

## What teacher inspired you the most growing up and why?

Mrs. Evelyn Skrmetta, my 8th grade teacher at DeLaura Middle School (now retired). She was there for me during the most challenging and transitional times in my young life – guiding me through tough family and personal situations. Even when I moved on to Satellite High and was bullied in 10th grade, she was there, providing me a safe place to land, an ear to listen, and reassuring words to lift my spirits. She inspired my passion for history and civic duty and even held a presidential election for us that year so we could have our vote counted! She is someone who is an enduring force in my life, and I will always be grateful for the love and compassion she had for me.

## Of the important initiatives you've been a part of, which do you feel has had the greatest impact?

School security and our mental health programs top my list. I am proud of the commitment we have made to put a School Resource Officer (SRO) in every school and that we have worked hard to implement most of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Commission's recommendations for school safety. We recently approved a proposal for an in-depth security risk assessment for each of our schools. We have secured recurring funds for suicide prevention programs, revamped the assessment process for students at risk and increased the number of social workers in our schools. We've made sweeping changes in recent years to keep our kids safe and to put greater focus on their social and emotional well-being.

## Tell us your favorite Heart of Brevard story.

The most inspiring story would have to be about the "hearts" who championed my oldest son Braden over the past 13 years from elementary school up through his graduation just this past May.

It is not an understatement to say he would not have gotten through without the encouragement, compassion and support of all his teachers, but it is the team at

Satellite High that carried him through his toughest times to the finish line of graduation. Teachers like Mr. Joe Scott.

Braden met Mr. Scott his freshman year when he was a student at Melbourne High and searching for a mentor for his science research project. Though Mr. Scott was a teacher at another school he mentored Braden countless hours helping him prepare, compete and ultimately place second in the science fair that year.

Later that year on his 15th birthday, Braden's father was killed in a motorcycle accident and his world collapsed.

He began to experience debilitating anxiety, panic attacks and struggled with depression. His high-performing grades and school participation began to tumble. It took a village to get him back to school and refocused on his studies. He transferred to Satellite High during his sophomore year and found a very supportive community there. Mr. Scott personally reached out and provided a safe and encouraging environment for Braden. He worked to help him thrive again, academically, mentally and emotionally. He attended many meetings, championing our son and making sure his needs were not overlooked.

I will be forever grateful to Mr. Scott for his investment in Braden, but I would be remiss in not also recognizing all of his teachers and the staff at Satellite who stepped up to help him succeed. Some examples like SRO and basketball coach Paul Creatura mentoring him by sharing his weekly "coaches life advice" - lessons from his own upbringing combined with lessons on qualities that all young men should have- Attendance clerk, Mrs. April Sell, contributed to his success by taking a special notice when he missed days and cheering him on when he made it to school on days he clearly was struggling.

The "hearts" at Satellite High got our son over the finish line. He is stronger, more confident and more prepared to take on life because of the role each person within Brevard Public Schools played to support him. They made the difference.

## What is your favorite quote?

"Find joy in the journey."



## CALLING ALL PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS!

### Are you looking to get your bachelor's or master's in education?

Grand Canyon University offers both options and has start dates in September, October and November! Lower tuition rates may be available to those who enroll with a local university representative.

For more information, please contact Mark Kaczmarek

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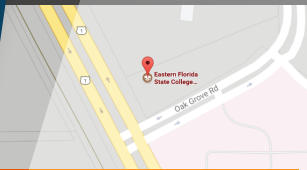
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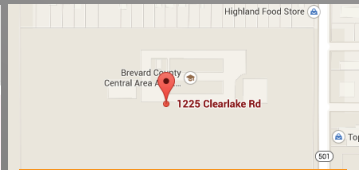
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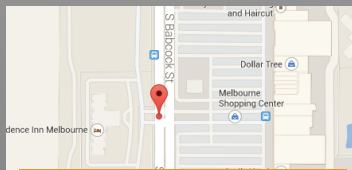
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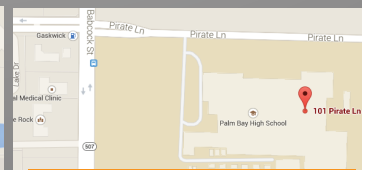
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